

Action Step IVd.1.2: Prioritize recommendations of the workgroup based on the feasibility and impact of implementing policy or programs.

Evidence of Completion: Written proposals with analysis

The department reviewed the Workgroup's report to assess its recommendations for feasibility and impact. Based on input from the Workgroup, the recommendations were divided into three categories: program change, policy change, and training. The department paid particular attention to the "recommendations for immediate action" detailed in the Workgroup's report (page 23). With input from the Workgroup during the last two quarters, the department agreed that these are issues that are of most urgent concern for the safety and well-being of children in the state's child welfare system, as well as the most feasible for prompt implementation. Using the Workgroup's report as written proposals for developing these priorities, the Workgroup has begun implementation on policy development, programmatic issues, and training.

First, the Workgroup will develop and issue policy to guide case practice for child welfare agencies serving immigrant and refugee children and families. The Workgroup and the department will focus on this area for the remainder of the PIP period. The workgroup will research best practice as well as law and policy in other states to develop policy to address those areas.

The Workgroup has prioritized its work on researching and developing policy; it will begin by addressing issues affecting client access to interpretation and translation services. When assessing the need for improved policy, it is clear that this is an area which has the greatest impact on families in all facets of the child welfare system. In the long term, the Workgroup will also work with the department to continue to evaluate potential resources to assist local agencies in the provision of adequate translation and interpretation services. The other policy areas will be addressed in the following order (if not concurrently): Placement Decisions, Emergency Situations, Immigration Status, Case Planning and Family Engagement, and Referrals to Attorneys.

The department has coordinated with the University of Wisconsin School of Social Work and Law School to hire three student interns to assist in this and other areas of implementation. One intern with the School of Social Work has completed her month-long internship and has created a draft guidebook for eligibility of social benefits. (This was already identified as a priority and is thus a separate action step within the PIP.) The law student intern has already begun research on national best practice and law to develop policy on language access issues affecting families in the child welfare system. Finally, the Workgroup is assisting Wisconsin's Child Welfare Professional Development System, in collaboration with Casey Programs, to coordinate a one-day training with both local and national experts on child welfare and immigration. This training will lay the groundwork for the development of future ongoing trainings in this area.

The Workgroup will also be distributing a survey to external stakeholders during the third quarter of the PIP period. Through the survey the Workgroup will evaluate feedback regarding barriers to adequately serving immigrant and refugee families in the child welfare system, and resources for addressing safety, permanence, and well-being issues of those families.